

Friday, April 30, 2021

News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty and instructors with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates during the Spring 2021 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](#). For current faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the ["Back to State Info for Faculty"](#) webpage.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS DIGEST

Beginning the week of May 3, this Digest will be published once a week on Friday.

FEATURED VIDEO

- Ottar Bjornstad, distinguished professor of entomology and biology, shares that while it's a highly optimistic scenario, [it's possible we could see reduced COVID-19 transmission by the end of summer 2021](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) shows ongoing results for all COVID-19 tests administered on campus since December 19, 2020, for faculty, staff, and students.
- As Penn State continues to prepare for the resumption of full on-campus activities and a return to in-person modes of instruction for fall 2021, [separate guidance for both faculty and staff has been crafted](#) to keep employees informed and to help the transition back to campus remain on track.
- The [vaccination clinic inside the Bryce Jordan Center on the University Park campus has resumed operations](#) and is offering individuals the choice between either the Johnson & Johnson or Moderna vaccines.
- Penn State has announced updated guidance and procedures for [hosting events and large gatherings](#) both on and off campus.
- Students are reminded of [move-out procedures and COVID-19 safety measures](#) as they prepare to move out of campus residence halls.
- Penn State strongly encourages all students to [upload their COVID-19 vaccine records](#) through myUHS.

- [For the spring 2021 semester, optional alternative grading is available for undergraduate students](#), and there is an exception process available for graduate students who wish to request optional alternative grades.
- [Wireless coverage has been added to many parking lots](#) at both University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses.
- Penn State Health is [partnering with community organizations](#) to provide underserved communities with information about the COVID-19 vaccines.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Penn State is strongly [encouraging all students to utilize the University's on-demand testing](#) to complete a COVID-19 test prior to departing their campus for the summer.
- The Next Gen Penn State Survey is now open until April 30. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community stakeholders can share their feedback on the characteristics, priorities and goals that are important to them for the University's next president. Click [here](#) to take the survey.
- It is strongly recommended that you share the following announcement with your students as part of the instructions for your end-of-semester assessment. You are welcome to either use this text verbatim or modify the information to suit the needs of your assessment or course. *"This assessment will evaluate two things. The first is your understanding of and ability to apply course information. The second is your integrity, your ability to face challenge with dignity and honesty. If you are tempted by dishonest opportunities, remember that students with an academic integrity violation will not be able to choose an alternative grade for this course."* Educators are encouraged to take advantage of the many academic integrity resources on the [keep teaching website](#) and to direct their students to the academic integrity resources on the [keep learning website](#). Educators seeking support around academic integrity can find a list of local academic integrity contacts at <https://keeplearning.psu.edu/contact-information/academic-integrity-contacts/>.
- Earlier this semester, an Academic Integrity Canvas module was created. Whether you downloaded the module and used it in your class, looked at the module back in February but didn't incorporate it into your spring class, or are just hearing about the Academic Integrity Canvas module for the first time, we would like to hear from you! Please complete this short [survey](#) to help us improve the Academic Integrity Canvas module for use in future semesters.
- The 2021 survey¹ from TLT regarding challenges students face during the pandemic found that 17% of students found differing layouts in Canvas challenging. To reduce this challenge during the upcoming semester, please

remember to use the [research-based guidelines](#) for setting up Canvas to be effective for your students! (¹ Serpi, A., Robert, J. (2021). *The remote teaching experience: 1 year later, How are instructors holding up?* Retrieved April 13, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.26207/fdjk-jr25>)

- Penn State is strongly encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to [sign up to get a vaccine as soon as they are able to receive one](#). Phase 2, which extends vaccine eligibility to all Pennsylvanians age 16 or older, began on April 13.
- [Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule](#)
 - Friday, May 7: no random testing (all campuses); one walk-up testing site open (Pegula Ice Arena).
 - Saturday, May 8: no random testing (all campuses); no walk-up testing.
- Walk-up testing is available to employees who are in the Return to Work database at University Park. Employees in that database also continue to have the option to do the opt-in mail kit testing. Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will continue as follows:
 - Walk-up testing at the Hintz Family Alumni Center will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
 - Testing availability will change on the dates listed above. More information is available [here](#).
- [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State’s COVID response. Questions may be submitted [here](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:

- The University’s comprehensive resources on its [“Back to State” page](#) and [updated FAQs](#) regarding on-campus work and learning
- Penn State’s [“Keep Teaching”](#) and [“Keep Learning”](#) websites, including many [Spring 2021 instruction-related FAQs](#)
- Penn State’s [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- Previous issues of this [Digest](#)
- The online archive of [video messages](#) from Penn State leaders and experts
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and [“Return to Work on Campus”](#) resource site
- The [“University Measures” webpage](#), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
- The University’s [health information page focused on personal safety practices](#) for individuals at all campuses
- A robust, updated [list of contacts and resources](#) for the University community
- The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](#) and other resources